

NEWS

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Desert Air Board Asks for Relief from Job-Killing Regulations

VICTORVILLE – The Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District’s Governing Board today agreed to send a letter to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and other top state officials requesting the repeal and/or suspension of the state law related to limits on greenhouse gas emissions, citing potentially devastating impacts to California’s struggling economy.

“If greenhouse gas emissions are to be addressed, then they should be addressed at the federal and international level,” said First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt, who serves on the air board. “As representatives of local government who will have to implement new state regulations, we on the MDAQMD Board are acutely aware of their likely impact on job creation and economic growth. California should not hamstring itself with a competitive disadvantage when the best thing we can do for air quality is create local jobs so people don’t have to commute. Rather than having the desired effect of reducing pollution, these regulations will drive businesses to other states or countries with less stringent rules, while our residents suffer the economic consequences.”

MDAQMD Executive Director Eldon Heaston warned during today’s discussion of an approaching regulatory “train wreck” if greenhouse gas rules promulgated by the California Air Resources Board are piled on top of other new, more stringent air quality regulations being adopted by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Heaston pointed out that California has made great progress in the effort to clean the air and those improvements continue, but he warned the new regulatory regime could cripple economic growth even as the air continues to improve. “We can’t have clean, green cities unless we can site jobs in those cities,” Heaston said.

Assembly Bill 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act, was passed in 2006 and calls for California to cut its greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, a reduction of 30 percent, and then an 80 percent cut below 1990 levels by 2050. Those cuts by California alone will have a minimal effect on global atmospheric carbon dioxide levels unless all nations adopt similar targets.

Recently-appointed Riverside County Supervisor John J. Benoit, who was sworn in to the MDAQMD Board today, said he voted against AB 32 while he was recently a member of the state Senate. “We don’t want to make California the greenest third-world economy in the world,” he said.

The members of the MDAQMD Board are all elected officials from desert cities and the counties of San Bernardino and Riverside. Some Board members suggested taking the issue back to each of their respective town and city councils to consider similar actions in calling for the repeal or suspension of AB 32.

“If enough local governments make their voices heard about how onerous and unrealistic these regulations are to our local communities and employers, Sacramento will have to take notice,” said Supervisor Mitzelfelt, who noted that major employers like cement manufacturers, who were represented at today’s meeting, will likely be crippled by AB 32 regulations if nothing is done to protect them.

Mitzelfelt also thanked Victorville City Councilman Mike Rothschild, who also serves on the air board, and who brought the issue before the Board.